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IRELAND UNFREED


POEMS OF 1921

BY

SIR WILLIAM WATSON

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POEMS AND VERSES WRITTEN IN
THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1921 BY
SIR WILLIAM WATSON 

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Dedication

To you, my little daughters, happy in being
The daughters also of an Irish mother,
And happiest when no other
Than the sweet Irish air
Is on your cheeks; to you that blithely share
The gleesome hours, and catch their bliss a-fleeing,
I, with grave pen. inscribe this little book;
Desiring—nay, foreseeing—
That you shall live to look
On Ireland's Freeing.

W. W.

THE larger part of the contents of these pages has not been printed before, but several of the sonnets and other poems and verses forming the lesser part have been published in the London *Daily News*, and one or two in the London *Times* and the *Daily Mail*. To the editors of these newspapers the author tenders his thanks for liberty to reclaim his contributions, some of which now reappear with altered titles, and three with material revision.

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IRELAND UNFREED

THE BOUND ONE

THOU whom not joys but perils and
pangs allure:

The white foam's sister, as the white
foam pure:

The dark storm's daughter, guarding
long and late

That far-descended heirloom, ancient
hate:

I cannot say—"In all things that con-
cerned

Thee and thy hopes I never swerved
or turned,

Or held with stumbling mind a waver-
ing creed."

But this at least I can declare indeed:
Through days with tempest packed,
 with thunder piled,
My dream was of an Ireland Recon-
 ciled
By utter undoing of wrongs all Earth
 saw done,
And by *full freedom to fair friend-*
 ship won:
Not mocked and cheated, conquering
 some vain goal
That could but foil the hunger of the
 soul,
And left as now, with the inmost ills
 unchanged,
The Spouse whom wedlock hath the
 more estranged,

Whom bonds do the more direly rend
apart;

No—but from long, long sickness of
the heart

Delivered: healed with a more sovereign
balm

Than the old deep hurts have known:
and in blest calm—

An Ireland willing to be loved at
last—

Risen from the agonies of the love-
less Past,

Risen from a hundred shatterings, great
and new.

O that 'twere mine to see that dream
come true!

MORE THAN TROPHIES

Ev'N were thy freeing complete,
The marks thy fetters made
Could not for ever in a moment fade,
O Erin, from thy feet!
Why should they? 'Twere more meet
That they remained, to be in times
afar
Held sacred, when perhaps mere glory-
ing Power,
And all its idols of an age or hour,
Unreverenced are.

REPRISAL BY FIRE

AND *this*, is *this* the justice that we
claim

To have kept untarnished in all realms
we sway—

This revel of vengeance, blotting the
pure day—

These barbarous deeds, that well might
make our name

A byword and a hissing and a shame
Throughout the Earth? This is the
doom-paved way

By which great Empires in august
array

March to their thunderous deaths 'mid
rage and flame.

These are the acts that in an hour
unblest

Cancel a thousand deeds benignly done,
Fling far away the good gains Wisdom
won,

And striking home to Man's most in-
ward breast

Make Domination seem a maniac jest
Heard 'mid the flare of a distempered
sun.

TO THE PRIME MINISTER

(THE RT. HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE)

WHEN France was flame, and Belgium
ashes, and while

O'er us the flying Death continually
Hung near, you rose to greatness.

You were he

Who in the teeth of the enemy's might
and guile

Did set a-whirring throughout all this
isle

The Wheels of the Machine of Victory.

And when shall we forget it? When
the Sea

Forgets his thunder, or the Morn her
smile.

But O sad change! Chiefly, to-day,
in *this*

Your mastery towers—that you forbear
to stir

A finger, while your minions fierce and
fell

Shatter doomed Ireland's homes, and
build in her

A suburb of the great metropolis

Of evil and woe, whose name on earth
is Hell.

TO SIR HAMAR GREENWOOD

No thin, pale fame, no brief and poor
renown,

Were thy just due. Of thee shall
wise Time say:

“Chartered for havoc, ’neath his rule,
were they

Whose chastisement of guilt was to
burn down

The house of innocence, in fear-crazed
town

And trembling hamlet. While he had
his way,

Converts untold did this man make
each day

To savage hate of Law and King
and Crown."

Great propagandist of the rebel creed!
Proselytiser without living peer!

If thou stand fast—if thou but per-
severe—

'Twill be thy glory to complete indeed
Valera's work, that doth ev'n now so
need

Thy mellow art's last touches, large
and clear!

WASTED BLANDISHMENTS

YES, we do justice—here and there;
And patch and peddle and repair;
And even sometimes wonder still
Whether our Rule be good or ill;
And marvel much, when Ireland's Soul
Defies a Government's control!

We spread before her that vain bait,
Co-partnership in our proud fate;
But waywardly and wildly wise,
She turns thereon undazzled eyes.
For she accounts of far more worth
Each foot of that green piece of earth

Yonder amid the Atlantic spray,
Where 'tis her children's dream to say:
"This is indeed our Isle—*our own!*
This is our Land—*and ours alone.*"

TO AMERICA CONCERNING
IRELAND

FRIEND with frank tongue, who o'er
the unflattering sea
Dost likewise flatter not: who view'st
the maze
And tangle of things through no vague-
shimmering haze:
Pledge thou thy word, that if, long
urged by thee,
We loose her bonds and set the
Thralled One free,
That Morn-fair deed, crowned with
Man's golden praise,
Shall not for us, in thy consenting
gaze,

24 TO AMERICA CONCERNING IRELAND

Prove the bright Mother of dark
calamity!

Then shall we know that some who
else might mar

The Dayspring, and drag Midnight
from its grave—

Some whose imperial dreams are loth
to die—

Will listen first beside the Western
Wave:

Will hear thy thundered interdict afar,
And flee in terror lest they hear it
nigh.

COMPLETE DELIVERANCE

“A LEAP in the Dark,” say the champions of Night.

O surely a leap *from* the Dark, into
Light!

A GLORIOUS IMMUNITY

THEE, wounded Ireland, thee I gratu-
late;

First, on thy wounds; next, on that
very fate

Whose malice hath yet spared thee one
worse woe

Than even thou hast tasted. For
although

Grievous is thraldom, in a world be-
thronged

With the proud wrongers and the
prostrate wronged,

Far deeper is the unconscious misery

Of them that shackle those who would
be free!

And though the thralled *seem* hapless,
theirs who thrall

Is the most dark, lost, heavenless state
of all.

TO ERIN ONCE MORE

UPON that Day when thou among
thy peers

Shalt take the place that is by right
thine own,

Judge not of England with a mind
too prone

To harsh, hard thoughts! Though oft
her palsyng fears

Did freeze up noble purpose, hers
were tears

For the world's heartache—hers no
breast of stone.

She wronged thee much: but speak
not blame alone,

When forth thou step'st into the
happier years.

And when, disburdened of a cumber-
ing weight,

Thou from the transitory and fugitive—
From thy dead yesterdays—art loosed,
to live

At peace with God and Man and
Time and Fate,

Be thine the greatness of the more
than great,

Whose glory it is, divinely to forgive.

AFTER NEWS OF AN
EXECUTION

Was it all folly—vonder, hour by hour,
To choose, not peace, but strife, and
thereto dare

The lion couched in his unnative lair,
The world-feared lion, mighty to
devour?

O that some folly as splendid were a
flower

Not, on all shores but those, so wondrous rare!

Common as weed in Ireland everywhere

That splendid folly blooms, and hath
the power

To make a mere slight boy not only
face

Death with no tremblings, with no
coward alarms,

But like a lover woo it to his arms,

Clasp with a joyous and a rapt
embrace

Death's beauty, Death's dear sweet-
ness, Death's pure grace,

And count all else as nought beside
Death's charms.

TILL IRELAND HAS HER
OWN

To all who heed, to all the freed,
To all the unfreed, 'tis known,
There'll be no rest for Ireland's breast
Till Ireland Has Her Own.
Age after age will nurse the rage
That breeds not rage alone,
Bringing no rest to Ireland's breast
Till Ireland Has Her Own!

And tell me, when may *Englishmen*
Win back the peace that's flown?
There'll be no rest for *England's* breast
Till Ireland Has Her Own.

Each day, each hour, unhappier Power,
On an unsurer throne!

No rest, no rest for *England's* breast
Till Ireland Has Her Own.

TO THE PRIME MINISTER
YET AGAIN

(THE RT. HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE)

LIKE your renown-clad namesake, who
 did slay,
Far across Time and its vast charnels
 drear,
If only with a legendary spear
A fabled dragon, you in your midday
Did unto ravening things give battle,
 and they
Felt your light lance through all their
 scales! They fear
That lance no more, perceiving but
 too clear

How rusted is its chivalry away.

Plunged is that spear in no foul
monster's side,

But pointed at the Captive Maiden's
breast,

Who, greenly robed, sits pining to
be free.

For not as her Deliverer do you ride
Forth, but to bid her guards be
adamant, lest

She escape i' the tempest from cap-
tivity.

THE STRANGER-MINSTREL

O FAIR with broom and woodbine,
And rowan and wild rose,
Is the Land of Hope Deferred
Where the shamrock grows;
And thither did I stray
In the long-gone day,
And I gave my heart away
To sweet Ireland.

Dead Songsters of her household
Have loved her and adored,
And their love was like a flame,
And their song was like a sword;

But an alien bard to-day,
All world-worn and gray,
Has sung his heart away
To sweet Ireland.

SECRET COMMUNION

PERT Folly said to skyborn Freedom:

“Thou

Hast been so long unknown on Ireland's
shore,

Art certain she doth miss thee any
more?

Nay, if thou should'st return to-morrow,
how

Will she remember thee, whose face is
now

One of the vague, dim things of here-
tofore?

What if she pause, loth to unlatch her
door

To such a stranger?" Then with a
lit brow

Did Freedom speak: "Can Erin's soul
forget

Mine, her companion 'mid the fields
and streams

Of her far youth? Ah, no! And
though it seems

Ages untold since she and I have
met

Ev'n for a day, we meet at midnight
yet,

For always am I with her in her
dreams."

TO AN IRISH PATRIOT

YOUR cause at its centre is pure: the
wise plan
Is to keep its circumference pure—if
you can.

TO AN OPPRESSOR

COME down from thy high seat!

If with the blood of men

Its steps be slippery, the more easy,
then,

The offsliding of thy feet!

And back thou never shalt be asked
to climb

While this tired World ascends the
stairs of Time.

THE TWO PUISSANCES

IRELAND, two Puissances there are, that
claim

Untrammelled sovereign lordship and
control,

This o'er thy body, thy fair outward
frame,

That o'er the innermost places of thy
soul.

One, by the Thames, of perishing clay
and lime

Built its chief seat, and of mere
crumbling stone.

One beside Tiber, gazing beyond
Time,
Hath its unfrail, unmundane, mystic
throne.

And great and mighty are both these
Powers on earth,
O Ireland! But all men that breathe
can see—
Except the sightless who are blind
from birth—
Which of the twain doth verily reign
in thee.

THE VISION

I LOOKED forth through the Void,
And a dark Hand did draw
From the near West a curtain, and
I saw
Dull Tyranny, on the breath of Folly
upbuoyed;
And a blind surgeon, Statecraft, there
employed
To keep the wounds of Ireland ever
raw;
And Rapine, masked as Order, his
vast maw
With vengeance still uncloyed;
And round these forms, a dance of
lawless Law
O'er Liberty Destroyed.

ENGLAND'S CHOICE

YONDER where shakes with antic
laughter

In elfin moonlight the spoilful sea,
What shall the stars behold hereafter—
Ireland captive or Ireland free?

Tempest or calm for the Mother who
bore us,

Age-crowned England—which shall
it be?

Reproach or acclaim in the morrow
before us?

Ireland captive or Ireland free?

The quick and the dead have joined
their voices,

O mighty and proud one, crying to
thee—

“Choose—while as yet in thy hands
the choice is:

Ireland captive or Ireland free.”

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